

Mayor Don Keil's Mayor's Message for July, 2015

I'd like to address a myth that's been around awhile. Admittedly, this myth may have been true at one time. I even helped propagate it myself back in the day, but I think we finally have it snuffed out.

The myth I refer to is that the Seguin's Planning and Building Code Enforcement are so bad, that no building contractor will build in Seguin. We are supposedly "running people off" by being so strict, uncaring and downright nasty in our enforcement of building codes and standards.

What I have witnessed over the past year and in particular over the past month have completely blown this myth to pieces. Thanks to our Planning director, Pam Centeno and her staff, we now have a much more understandable and searchable set of building and zoning codes and designations. She and her crew are doing all they can to be as customer friendly and informative as possible with all contractors and developers.

As you may have noticed, there's a lot of building going on in our town. Much of the construction is being done by developers and contractors who have never built in Seguin before. We constantly get accolades from these folks about how well they were treated, and how easy our staff is to work with. They then mention horror stories about dealing with cities around the country, including San Antonio and Austin, and yes, even New Braunfels.

To carry this further, the professionalism and competence of our city staff was truly evident in the recent dealings with Niagara Bottling. We had many meetings with Niagara, but one in particular stands out. It was a meeting where Niagara had brought their entire development team to Seguin – must have been 10 – 12 people. They had their architects, designers, engineers, marketers, executives, and even economic developers at the table. Also at the table were Doug Faseler, our City Manager, Terry Trevino, our superstar economic developer, and virtually every staff department manager.

Every single question asked by Niagara was answered professionally and without hesitation, and with a depth of knowledge that was clearly impressive.

As mayor, I was so impressed and incredibly proud of our staff at that meeting. The Niagara folks, who build plants all over the United States were equally impressed with the knowledge and character of our staff. You can credit our City Manager, Doug Faseler for assembling such a great team of professionals.

Now that we are talking about Niagara Bottling, I'd like to address another myth. Maybe I shouldn't call it a myth, so I'll call it a mis-conception, or maybe an unnecessary fear.

It is natural and perfectly understandable to be wary of a large water user in our part of the country. In Texas, water is our most precious commodity. We were very concerned about this as we evaluated Niagara and their effect on our water supply.

Thanks to previous city administrations led by Mayor Stautzenberger and Mayor Matthies, and a brave, forward-thinking group of citizens who formed the Schertz-Seguin Local Government Corporation (SSLGC), we are assured of plenty of water in the future.

To make this very short and simple, all of our residential and retail water is obtained through this partnership with the City of Schertz. It is groundwater and comes from the Carrizo aquifer. This supply has enough proven reserves to serve our residents for the next 50 years and beyond.

The city of Seguin also has excellent surface water availability (7,000 acre/ft per year) from the Guadalupe River. Niagara will be using this Guadalupe River surface water.

This water also serves other industrial users such as Tyson and the CPS Power Plant. Right now, we use less than 50% of this water. The water is segregated, and has its own main pipeline that comes directly from the treatment plant at Starcke Park, and flows northward along Walnut Branch. It does not enter our water towers, and runs directly to the property designated for Niagara and to its eventual neighbor, Grupo Siro. Even with the usage by Niagara and Siro, we will still have excess capacity in our surface water for even further industrial expansion. Here's the deal...We can either use the water to create jobs and wealth, or we can let it flow out into the Gulf of Mexico.

I think it is important for everyone to know that we did not make the decision to recruit Niagara without careful evaluation by engineers and experts that assured us that our water supplies are sufficient to handle the load. I think it's also important that we thank all those forward-thinking folks who came together and formed the SSLGC, and gave us the gift of abundant water for generations to come.

Gosh, I love this town!